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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

28 November 1984

Worsening PCF-Soviet Relations

Summary

Soviet handling of the recent release of a French journalist captured in Afghanistan has further soured relations between the CPSU and the French Communist Party (PCF). But PCF fear of encouraging internal dissidents -- who call for independence from the Soviet Union -- as well as unwillingness to jeopardize important financial ties to Moscow will probably prevent an open rupture. [redacted]

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Longstanding Frictions

The PCF's decision in 1981 to join the leftist government of President Francois Mitterrand reportedly angered the Kremlin, which viewed Mitterrand as hostile to Soviet interests in Europe. Although Moscow's attitude appeared to soften over the first year of PCF participation -- perhaps due to the party's staunch support of Soviet policies in Afghanistan and Poland -- serious differences soon reappeared. Soviet efforts to elicit public PCF backing for its demand to include French missiles in INF negotiations led to a spat with the visiting PCF Secretary General Georges Marchais in July 1983. Marchais at first approved a joint communique calling for inclusion, but then insisted on the hasty withdrawal of the document. The French press concluded that Marchais's withdrawal lacked conviction and saw his actions as generally supporting Soviet interests. The entire episode embarrassed the PCF at home and left it open to charges of toadyism from the right and accusations of disloyalty from its Socialist partners in government.* [redacted]

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Relations continued to worsen after Andropov's death. Chernenko snubbed Marchais publicly at Andropov's funeral, probably because the PCF had strongly backed Andropov against him as Brezhnev's successor. The PCF leaders retaliated by withholding traditional congratulations to Chernenko. Earlier this year, the French party openly courted the dissident Spanish Communist Party and publicly condemned a Russian anthropological study that delineated several ethnic nationalities in the French population. In May, PCF leaders openly deplored Moscow's decision to boycott the Olympics, an act they characterized as incomprehensible. [redacted]

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The Abouchar Affair

[redacted] PCF anger with Moscow was further fanned by the way the Soviets handled the release of a French journalist, Jacques Abouchar, recently captured in Afghanistan. The French media whipped up a frenzy of emotion among the public, leaving the PCF little choice but to denounce Abouchar's capture and trial. The party nevertheless sought to preserve the fiction of Soviet noninvolvement by blaming the Kabul regime and breaking relations with the Afghan party. [redacted]

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[redacted] Communist leaders probably expected Moscow to have Kabul release the journalist to them, allowing them to [redacted]

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claim that their pressure on the Afghan party had been instrumental in winning his release. PCF officials were left high and dry, however, when the Soviets themselves turned Abouchar over to a visiting French Socialist delegation.

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Outlook

Although PCF-Soviet relations go through periodic ups and downs, the current estrangement is a new low.

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Moscow's behavior, moreover, almost certainly has encouraged the French party's dissident faction, which now controls about one-fourth of the Central Committee, to assert more strongly its demand for greater distance between the PCF and the Soviets. Together with growing disaffection for Moscow among middle-of-the-roaders like Marchais and foreign affairs director Maxime Gremetz, this could diminish the PCF's once-vocal public defense of Soviet foreign policy and actions.

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We do not believe, however, that French Communists will break with Moscow. Conservatives who still hold sway in the French Politburo favor continued close ties with the USSR.

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The party's serious financial problems -- born of declining membership, flagging newspaper sales, and lost municipal offices -- are an even more important consideration and will almost certainly make the PCF more dependent on its financial ties to the Kremlin.*

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*The PCF almost certainly receives some covert financial assistance from the USSR, but most of its funding from Moscow is "earned" through the virtual monopoly of French agricultural trade with the Soviet Union by INTERAGRA, a conglomerate controlled by French business tycoon Jean-Baptiste Doumeng -- sometimes called "the Red billionaire." Doumeng's businesses are the principal conduits for funds to the PCF. In its present domestic financial straits, the PCF probably depends on Moscow, directly or indirectly, for more than 50 percent of its financing.

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